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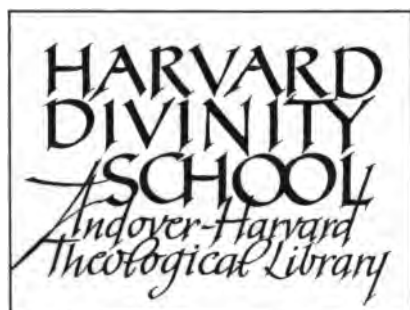
PERSONALITY AND THEISM

Two Essays

BY

FREDERIC HENRY HEDGE

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PERSONALITY:

A PAPER READ BEFORE A CLERICAL CONFERENCE.

WORDS exercise a fatal influence on thought and belief. When turned from their original import and fixed in some perverted use, they breed misconception and propagate endless error.

The word *persona* (from which our English "person") meant originally a mask such as ancient actors wore upon the stage. In the Greek and Roman drama all the parts were performed in masks. The mask was called in Greek *πρόσωπον*, from *πρόσωπον*, "face;" in Latin, *persona*, from *persono*, "I sound through." Hence very naturally these words came to signify the part performed, the character represented. We say in English to *personate* a character; that is, to wear the mask of that character.

From the boards of the theatre the phrase was transferred to the scenes of life. *Persona* was used to denote the character which an individual presented to the world, the part he enacted in

social life. The part might be genuine or feigned, guise or disguise, nature or art. Livy says, *personam alienam ferre*, "to act a foreign part." Cicero uses the expression, *tantam personam sustinet*, "he acts so important a part." But the fact is, every man in society acts a part. Conscious or unconscious, feigned or true, with or without simulation or dissimulation, every man is an actor; and all that we really know of any man is the part he acts, — his appearance in the eyes of his fellow-men. The real man is never seen, but only his simulacrum. And as that simulacrum is inseparable from the individual, as it represents the individual to his kind, so the word *persona* came to signify the individual himself. *Mea persona*, or *nostra persona*, says Cicero; that is, "I myself."

We use "person" in the same sense; we say indifferently "person" or "individual," making no distinction between the two. For ordinary purposes we are justified in so doing, since all we can know of individuals is their persons, their manifestation of themselves to the eye or ear. Only it behooves us to remember that there is something deeper in man than his person, and that though the person is the outbirth of the individual, is constituted by the individual, it nevertheless is not the individual, is not identical with the innermost being, but something exterior and distinct.

What then is that interior something that underlies the person,—the ultimate ground of our being? Most men, I suppose, identify it with the *I*, the *ego*, the conscious self. This seems to be the prevailing opinion; it is a very natural one. When we say “*I*,” we seem to express our innermost being, for the obvious reason that consciousness can no farther go; the *ego* is the deepest that consciousness knows. But the application of scientific analysis to the act of consciousness will show that the *ego* is not the deepest in man, is not the ground of our being.

Observe that consciousness is not a stated condition, but an occasional one. Being is perpetual, consciousness is not. The most inveterate egoist cannot be always aware of himself. Consciousness is the product of occasion; moreover, it has a physical origin,—it is the result of certain specific motions of the brain. In the case of simple consciousness,—that is, conscious sensation,—what causes the motion is some impression from without. Consciousness is the response of the mind to that impression. The connecting link between the motion in the brain and the consciousness which ensues, is a mystery. That which produces consciousness must of course be antecedent to consciousness,—consequently out of the reach of consciousness.

Still less in the case of compound or self-consciousness can consciousness detect its own origin. All we know is that on some provocation, represented by a motion in the brain, it is born out of the unfathomable abyss of the unconscious which lies behind it. The nearest approach to an explanation of it is to say that it is the product of two factors, — the unconscious spirit, and a human brain.

Such is the genesis and natural history of the ego. And I suppose the ego to be peculiar to man. The brute I suppose to have only simple consciousness, not the reflected consciousness of self. The brute does not think *I*. The action of spirit in that sphere of life is too feeble — or, what is the same thing, the brain is of too coarse a fibre — to produce a conscious self. Neither, at the other end of the scale, can I ascribe self-consciousness to God. Self-consciousness is inconceivable without a body or some kind of framing. Its prime condition is limitation. Self is made self by self-circumscription. In order to be self-conscious God must part with his infinity; that is, cease to be God. When the Scriptures represent him as saying “*I*,” the thought imputed to him is as much an anthropomorphism as the imputation of articulate speech.

From this view of self-consciousness it follows that the human ego, so far from being the real

man, our innermost nature, is merely an incidental phenomenon. It is not a being, but an act, a thought, an occasional reflection of an unknown being in a human organism. I exist only in the act of self-consciousness. Destroy self-consciousness,—and there are lesions of the brain which have that effect,—and I cease to exist. 'Tis a fact of vulgar experience that the ego is not, *a parte ante*, conterminous and coeval with our being. There is a time, varying, I suppose, from the second to the fourth year, when a human individual first says to himself, "I." There was a day, an hour, a minute, of my history when, having for some years existed for others as a person, I was born to myself. Sometimes, but rarely, an individual is able to recall the moment of that nativity. Jean Paul, in his autobiography, boasts that experience. "Never," says he, "shall I forget what as yet I have told to no one, a mental transaction whereby I assisted at the birth of my self-consciousness, when all at once 'I am an I' rushed before me like a flash of lightning from heaven, and since then has remained luminously persistent. Then for the first time my *I* had seen itself, and forever." What is the psychological import of that experience? We are apt to regard it as the rising into view of the deepest in man, of the whole man. But observe that the act of

consciousness which shows us self does not comprehend that self, does not fathom it; it only distinguishes it from other selves and the outside world, our own bodies included. It is a flash which momentarily defines our individuality,— defines it laterally, but not vertically; it does not reach to the root of our being. In the moment of intensest self-consciousness we bear, not the root, but the root us.

The question recurs, then, What is the innermost nature in man? What is that interior being which underlies the person, and which underlies the conscious self? To that question the only honest answer is a confession of ignorance. "No one," says Von Hartmann, "knows directly the unconscious subject of his own consciousness; he knows of it only as the secret psychical cause of his consciousness." Respecting this unknown being there are two theories to choose between. The one coincides with the common belief of a separate individual soul as the ground and matrix of the individual consciousness; the other, known in philosophy as the "monistic" view, supposes that all individual consciousnesses, all separate egos, have the one universal Being for their common ground. The latter view has found its latest and ablest representative in the author just named. "The resistance to this view," says Von Hartmann

again, "is only the old prejudice that consciousness is the soul. So long as that prejudice has not been overcome, and every secret remnant of it completely annihilated, the all-oneness of the Unconscious will be veiled. Only when it is understood that consciousness is not essential, but phenomenal, appertains not to the being, but to the appearance; that, accordingly, the multifoldness of consciousness is but a multifold manifestation of the One,—only then will it be possible to emancipate oneself from the dominion of the practical instinct which clamors perpetually, 'I,' 'I,' and to comprehend the beings-unity of all apparent individuals, bodily and spiritual."

The first theory is best represented in Leibniz's *Monadology*. According to that great thinker, the human organism is an aggregation of indivisible entities, of which the central or regent entity, being capable of self-consciousness, may be called soul *par excellence*, to distinguish it from the others, to which he gives the name of "monads."

I do not care to undertake the advocacy of either of these views, nor do I feel myself called upon to declare to which of the two I incline. I will only remark, in passing, that if this conference is to be—what, as I understand, the planners of it proposed to themselves—a confer-

ence of theologians; if we meet here on scientific ground, and not on the basis of practical religion, — then current beliefs and theological prepossessions must not be allowed to control our decisions of the subjects discussed.

We have, then, these three constituents of our humanity: 1. The unknown factor which constitutes the ground of our being. 2. The ego, or conscious self. 3. The person. It is the last of these with which I am now especially concerned. The person, I have said, is not the individual proper, but the manifestation of the individual to others, — the image he presents to the world, his character as shown in word and deed, the man as he moves in the scenes of life. Using the word "person" in this sense, what relation does the person bear to the individual? How much of the individual goes into the person? I answer, all that given conditions (in which term I include native endowment, temperament, organization, education, social relations, fortune, worldly position) will allow. We cannot say absolutely that the individual is entirely expressed in his person. We feel in some cases that there are capabilities in a man which are not brought out, which find no scope or demonstration in life. But then, the very feeling which such persons inspire in us is a part of their personality. It belongs to them to

create in us this impression of reserved power with which we credit them. On the whole, if we cannot say that the person is all there is *in* a given individual, we can say it is all there is *of* him. It is all, at least, that we know of him. It is all that concerns the world. If we would but see it, it is all that really concerns ourselves.

It is here that I would lay the emphasis of immortality. That the soul, the innermost being, is immortal, requires no proof. It belongs to the nature, to the very definition, of an entity to be indestructible. What most concerns us in this connection is the all-important fact of the immortality of the person, — of the character we present, the part we enact in the scenes of life. That is the true *manes*, — that which remains of us when the fleshly form has vanished out of sight. To live on this earth is not to live while the body lasts, and then no more, it is to live here forever. We are perpetually casting ourselves into our action, and the cast remains ; we leave our duplicate behind us when we die. “I am with you always, unto the end of the world,” said Jesus to his disciples when about to vanish from their sight. The saying has been verified through all these ages, is still verified in the consciousness of the Christian Church. Christ is still a denizen of earth, — still richly, beneficently, divinely with us in the image

of himself which he stamped on the world ; he is with us in the faiths and charities which bear his name,—nearer to us at this moment than he was to those first disciples who sat with him at the same board and drank of the same cup.¹ That divine man is but one instance pre-eminent among many. We recognize in his case that persistency of person which is true in all cases. We recognize it in the men of exceptional genius or piety,—the prophets, sages, teachers, singers who have stretched an intellectual firmament over this work-a-day world, and set their beaming thoughts in it for sun and stars to light up our life. We do not recognize it, but nevertheless it is true of all who have lived and labored in earthly places of every kind and degree. All who were once here are still here: their works are they, their words are they ; and though word and work be forgotten, their influence for good or evil survives,—their person is immortal. In one of the old religions it was taught that the soul of the deceased on its way to heaven or hell must traverse a narrow bridge across a gulf of fire. In that passage it encounters a spectre, which being interrogated, answers,

¹ The bodily presence of a man is not that which best reveals him, — rather, it is something which intervenes between him and us. Detached from the body, divested of all that is extrinsic and accidental, he is seen in his own light, in all his sides and proportions, the immortal person.

"I am the spirit of thy life." Visible or invisible, recognized or not, in the case of every soul that has borne the burden of this mortal that spirit survives, — the spirit of the life. Earth teems with such. The world of spirits is all about us, — not in the coarse sense of swarming entities lurking in the air, but in the sense of ideas and influences derived from all the past.

Grandly George Eliot breathes the wish, —

" Oh may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence, — live
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars.
 . . . So to live is heaven, —
To make undying music in the world.
 . . . May I reach
That purest heaven, — be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardor, feed pure love,
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion ever more intense.
So shall I join the choir invisible
Whose music is the gladness of the world."

The air we breathe is thick with the influences, good and bad, which successive generations have put forth. Every individual in all those generations has contributed something by his character and life to make the world what it is. The humblest and most obscure has contributed something. The humblest and most obscure that has ever

lived in this world lives here forever. This is what I understand by personal immortality. It is the only immortality which a wise man need concern himself about; and for him who is careless of this, no other immortality will yield any satisfying fruit.

There is another branch of this subject, "Personality," which perhaps it was expected that I should discuss,—personality as predicated of God.

In what sense can we speak of God as person? Recurring to my fundamental position, that the person is not the being as such, but the being in action,—self-presentment, manifestation,—I answer that all we can know of God is his personality: the manifestation of himself in action. Creation, providence, revelation, moral government,—these constitute the personality of God: his theophanies are his person. Beyond these we cannot penetrate. We must not confuse the manifested God with the transcendental ground of the manifestation,—the revealed with the absolute unrevealeable. When asked if I believe in a personal God, I might answer, I believe in no other. But I seem to detect in that question a latent impression of a limiting form,—a God existing in spatial separation from the All.

Mr. Matthew Arnold, the English dogmatist,

hugs himself with his definition of God, protruded with wearisome iteration, in his "God and the Bible," "The Eternal, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness,"—surely the thinnest film of Godhead that ever pretended to the honors of theism; scant pattern with which to clothe the spirit of devotion! The moral order of the universe which Mr. Arnold, affecting simplicity, has chosen to designate in this roundabout way, is but one of the modes of deity. It cannot in any proper sense be said to constitute deity; for though practically, for human use, the moral order is ultimate, it can never be ultimate to speculative thought, but refers us at once to an ordering Will as its origin and law. Kant, in the "Critique of Practical Reason," has indicated this connection. The moral law, he argues, commands us to seek the best good of society. The possibility of that good is implied in the law which requires us to seek it. But the highest good is possible only through the adaptation of Nature to that result; that is, through the consent of Nature with the moral law. But the moral law itself affords not the slightest ground for a necessary agreement between well-doing and well-being, between righteousness and blessedness. The subject of that law is himself a part of Nature, and therefore dependent upon it; he cannot force its agreement with

the law. "Consequently" (I translate literally), "the existence is postulated of a *Cause* of universal nature, distinct from Nature, which shall contain the ground of this connection; to wit, the exact correspondence between blessedness and righteousness," — that is, God is the postulate of practical reason. "The highest good for the world," he continues, "is possible only so far as we assume a supreme Nature which exercises a causality commensurate with moral sentiment."

The phrase "not ourselves," "the Eternal, not ourselves," etc., is peculiarly unfortunate, since it is precisely in ourselves and through ourselves that the eternal moral lives and works. If Mr. Arnold means to say simply that we did not make ourselves, he says what no one will dispute, but what hardly deserved such pompous enunciation, or required to be erected into a "rigorous and vigorous" theory. It was written long ago, "*He* hath made us, and not we ourselves." This venerable saying, of which the latter clause is a fact of consciousness, in one or another sense is accepted by all. The question is what we mean by "*He*," — whether blind Force, or intelligent Will. It is that which fixes the dividing line between theism and atheism.

Our dogmatist will have no God who thinks and loves. Such a God, he insists, is but "a magnified, non-natural man." "Thinking" and "loving," I

admit, are unscientific terms as applied to deity; they are anthropomorphisms. But I maintain that they are necessary anthropomorphisms; religion cannot do without them. Mr. Arnold, though writing professedly in the interest of religion, does not, it seems to me, sufficiently appreciate the exigencies of religion. He would have everything rationalized; he would have scientific statements, abstract formulæ. But abstract formulæ belong not to religion, but to science. Religion is not a realm of philosophic perceptions, but of sentiment and imagination; and the language of religion, derived from the sentiments and imagination, is symbolical. The philosophic mind may be safely trusted to translate such terms as "thinking" and "loving," applied to God, into their philosophic equivalents; but religion reduced to such formulæ as "the Eternal, not ourselves," and religion metamorphosed into this new gospel according to Matthew, would become too volatilized for purposes of worship. Such a religion could never serve the common need of mankind. Sensible of this, impressed with the exigencies of religion as distinguished from science, I cherish the traditional phrases and ritual language of the Church. Whatever Jesus may be historically, ecclesiastically he is Christ the Lord. However my philosophy may formulate its concepts of deity,

the God whom I worship is a God who sees and hears, and thinks and loves, and pities and approves. Nor do I at all object to the "magnified, non-natural man." On the contrary, it seems to me that this is precisely such a God as religion needs. Not the human form,—although, of course, the vulgar imagination will have that idol,—not the bodily form, but the moral image, the human attributes, the attributes of ideal humanity. The God of religion must be an intelligent and moral nature. No being destitute of those attributes can fill that place; and of those attributes we can form no idea, except as they are manifest in human subjects. Religion supposes them infinitely extended, and invests its God with their likeness. The God of our devotion, if devotion is to have a definite object, must be in some sense human,—a "magnified, non-natural man:" non-natural, because nature is birth, and God is unborn. I am well aware of the danger of not distinguishing between the moral image and the human form,—or rather, of the tendency to embody in a human form the human attributes of deity. The very use of the personal pronoun in this connection is misleading. It is unavoidable; we must say *he* and *his* if we speak of God at all. But what subtle idolatries lurk in those pronouns! How strong the tendency to conceive of God as not only distinct from creation in

idea, but as spatially separated from creation, — as an individual in space! It is a trick of the imagination, of the image-making faculty, to figure the divine presence in a human form. Swedenborg, in whom imagination and reason, the visionary and the thinker, were strangely blended, maintains that the human form is that in which God appears to spiritual vision. I shall not dispute his dictum, for I have no experience which enables me to distinguish between spiritual vision, in Swedenborg's sense, and imagination, — indeed, I can conceive of no concrete theophany other than that of the human form. But spiritual vision does not necessarily imply an objective reality corresponding therewith. To suppose that God exists objectively in that form, is to suppose him materially and spatially bounded, — which conflicts with my conception of the divine nature. If I am asked what form I would substitute, how I suppose the divine nature invested, I answer frankly, I have no substitute. I do not care to idolize God, or to represent him to myself by any mental image. To my conception, nothing less than the material universe can serve us as his embodiment. I follow the analogy of the human microcosm. What the human soul is to the human individual, that I conceive God to be to the universe of things, — its central soul, regent in all and present in all by diffused consciousness, as

the soul is present by diffused consciousness in every part of the human organism. The human organism is a world in little, of which the soul is its God ; the world in its entirety is a body, of which God is the soul, — not identical with the body in thought, and not separated from it in space. This is the best conception I can form to myself of deity, — conscious, nevertheless, how inadequate all concepts of deity formed by the understanding must be.

The old theology — the Christian theology of the fourth and fifth centuries — took precisely the opposite direction. The idea that the world could be in any sense the embodiment of God, would have shocked the theologians of that day scarcely less than flat denial of his being. The Jewish tradition of the entire separation of Jehovah from all contact with material Nature — a tradition which Gentile converts, disgusted with the grossness of polytheistic nature-worship, readily embraced, and which was strongly reinforced by Manichean influences — made the world seem utterly godless and corrupt, given over to the prince of darkness, whom even Luther in later ages recognized as prince of this world. God dwelt, remote from the visible world, in holy seclusion. But “God,” says Newton, “is a relative term,” — *Deus est vox relativa.*

It was perhaps a dim sense of this truth — discontent with the idea of the insularity of God — which gave such importance to the doctrine of the Trinity. I have never seen it suggested, but the thought has occurred to me, that a powerful agent in establishing the trinitarian theology must have been the church-feeling of a God-forsaken world. *Deus est vox relativa*. There must be something to which God relates, — an object to that subject, or a subject to that object. If the world be excluded from that relation, what remains but a second God, — the Word, or the Son? In the Son, God eternally generates himself, sees himself, becomes conscious; and the Spirit is that in which generator and generated unite, — the ever-proceeding demonstration; the end and object of that demonstration being, not the world, which was wholly ignored in this system, but the Christian Church. Being, Action, Process, Product, — Father, Son, Spirit, Church: this was all that theology recognized. Earth and sun and moon and stars, — the infinite universe with all its forces and systems, of which those brooding, wrangling churchmen were the momentary products, did not come into their calculation. All that was the Devil's domain, — brute background to the ghostly All. The author of the "Theologia Germanica" says: "The Evil Spirit and Nature are one." The All, as these Fathers interpreted the

scheme of God, was complete without Nature. The Mother was left out in the cold, expelled with a *three-pronged fork*, so great was the reaction against the Nature-worship of the Graeco-Roman world. You know the proverb, *Naturam furca*. Do you know who it was that emancipated the modern mind from the narrowness, the one-sidedness, the spiritual thralldom of trinitarian theology? You will name to me perhaps the recognized fathers of Unitarianism, — Servetus, Cellarius, the Sozzini, and certain English worthies, who knocked away the Biblical supports of the Trinity and ruled it out of their creed. They did a good work: far be it from me to undervalue their labors. But I greatly doubt if exegesis alone, if improved Biblical criticism, would ever have wrought that deliverance which is now going on in the popular mind, by which, in spite of conventional symbols, of formal confessions, of labored expositions, and agonizing efforts of here and there a disputant to reinforce and rehabilitate the obsolete dogma, is gradually pushing it aside, and, without denying or caring to controvert, is dismissing it from the habitable chambers of consciousness to the limbo and chancery of things indifferent; so that whereas to impugn it once was a monstrous exception, to contend for it now with much earnestness is almost as exceptional. This

change is due to Spinoza. He, by his doctrine of the One Substance and the immanence of God in creation, shifted the balance of divinity from the realm of ghostly abstraction to the visible All. He re-established the sacredness of Nature, — that Nature which the author of the “Theologia Germanica” expressly identified with the Evil Spirit; he restored the natural world to its rightful place in the reverent love of human kind. Natural science succeeded to the vacant chair of scholastic philosophy. Newton and Leibniz and Haller and Harvey succeeded to Saint Thomas and Duns Scotus and Occam and Hugh Saint Victoire. They thought it worth the while to study a world which God had set in their hearts, and in studying which they became acquainted with him. Spinoza turned the Devil out of doors of the *rerum natura*; and with that extrusion the old theologic world recedes more and more into dim and spectral distance and forgottenness. It sounds strange to say that trinitarian doctrine needs the support of the Devil; but it is so far true that the fancied domination of the Devil, and the consequent profaneness and accursedness of the sensible world, excluded Nature from that place in the interest and intellect of earnest, studious men which it now occupies, and which trinitarian theology occupied then.

I use the word “trinitarian” by way of *pars pro*

toto. I have no quarrel with that particular dogma on account of any falsity in it, but only on account of its inadequacy, compared with its claims and the place it has usurped in the scheme of things. The dogma is true enough as far as it goes. Father, Son, and Spirit, — unquestionably these three are in God, and they are one God; but they do not comprise, or do not express, the whole of Deity. I can hardly imagine a trinitarian formula that would. In any such statement the categories must either be too comprehensive to serve the purpose of exact classification, — that is, to prevent the unlawful confounding of the persons, — or else they must be too rigid to prevent the forbidden dividing of the substance. My God is not tri-personal, but multi-personal. But out of this multitude of divine personalities I distinguish with special note two persons, not indicated, or very imperfectly indicated, in the ecclesiastical Trinity, — Providence, and Moral Rule. Independently of all ecclesiastical teaching, led by my own observation and reflection, I think I should have recognized a divine Providence in human things, shaping, guiding, controlling, and causing all things in the final result to work for good to human subjects. If there be such a Providence, its motive must be benevolent design, — what theologians call “the goodness of God.” And yet the

so-called goodness of God is precisely the weakest point in natural theology ; it is there that the *a posteriori* proof of the being of God — the proof from Nature and life — is most difficult and most assailable ; it is there that pessimism and atheism find their advantage and deal their most telling blows. The goodness of God consists with a great deal of misery and helplessness and want and distress ; it consists with extreme suffering ; with the existence of myriads who are born diseased and maimed and crippled, and drag their life through years of pain, without apparently one full draught of the joy of being ; it consists with the perishing of hundreds of thousands by Indian famines in the absence of rain ; it consists with tempest and earthquake and blight ; it consists with the fears and fightings of the animal kingdom, brute preying on brute, and with all the conflicts and agonies of irrational Nature which constitute so large a portion of the life of the world. The answer to all this, so far as man is concerned, is given in the one word, "Progress." Misery abounds ; but life is stronger than all its ills, and statistics show that, taking large periods into view, the human condition, on the whole, improves. The moral forces of the universe, unlike the material, are a constantly increasing quantity ; and with increase of moral force the miseries and woes of human life

are gradually abating. The reign of reason is slowly, but surely, gaining on the reign of passion, the reign of love on the wrath of man, the dominion of science on brute nature. A better understanding of the laws of health, as well in the social as in the physical economy, will more and more triumph over pauperism, intemperance, and disease,—the three main sources of mortal woe. The goodness of God, impugned by the ills and sorrows of life, is vindicated by its vast possibilities and the ever-new-blossoming hope ineradicably planted in the human soul. The sufferings of the brute-world present a more difficult problem. Here our theodicy has to assume that existence to every creature is, on the whole, a blessing. If the contrary could be proved, then I confess my theodicy would be hopelessly at fault; for brutes I consider have an equal claim with human kind on the author of their being for a balance of joy in the dispensation of life, and a God of whom goodness and omnipotence can be predicated is bound to secure that balance to the meanest of his creatures. But excess of suffering in the brute creation can never be proved or made probable to any but a pessimistic interpreter.

The other person in the Godhead to be distinguished with special emphasis is the moral governor and judge. There is nothing more de-

finite in deity than the moral jurisdiction which the Ruler of all exercises over rational natures. The demonstration of this rule is given in each man's consciousness in that principle — inborn, I think we may call it — which distinguishes between right and wrong; in fact, creates that distinction, which commands the right and forbids the wrong, and which punishes disobedience with internal suffering more or less acute, according to moral development. These three, — moral perception, moral obligation, moral retribution, — which for want of a better designation we call "conscience," constitute the *Eternal in ourselves* that makes for righteousness. They are a part of ourselves, — no other satisfactory account can be given of their origin, — and they are our surest witness and proof of deity. Let no one think to find complete demonstration of a moral government of the universe out of the realm of conscience, to find the eternal that makes, etc., in human society, in the external fortunes of men. Some indications there are of the operation of a moral law in the fortunes of individuals and of states sufficient to illustrate, but not sufficient of themselves to establish, the moral government of God. A close observation of the facts of life reveals but a very imperfect correspondence between character and fortune, between destiny and desert. Obviously the best men are

not the most prosperous. The virtues that bring the amplest and surest rewards in the way of worldly success are the little virtues, virtues of the lowest class; the great virtues do not "pay," in the worldly sense. And when we observe in the administration of social justice how the little rogues are caught in the meshes of the law, while the great rogues escape; how the wretch who commits an act of petty larceny to save his children from starvation is sent to prison, while the financier, who impoverishes thousands by dishonest speculations, flourishes in impunity; when we note how the girl who sins through momentary weakness becomes an outcast, while her guilty seducer maintains his place in society,—there would seem to be as much in the "not ourselves" that makes for unrighteousness as there is that "makes for righteousness." It is not there, not, at least, within the horizon of individual experience, that the moral governor of the universe can be found. In the large historic courses "which the brooding soul surveys," it may be true that the wrongs of life are transmuted into means and motives of moral growth. An atoning Providence will macadamize the stony injustices of passing time into smoother roads for the feet of advancing Humanity; but within the sphere of the visible present these roughnesses are stones of offence to seekers of

the right which almost justify the pessimism that swears by them and at them. Tragic enough, if we look for manifestations of the moral order in earthly fortunes, is the fate of many who have blessed the world with their words and deeds. What reward have they who have given the strength of their days and hours of bloody sweat to lift mankind a little out of darkness and bondage into liberty and light? Our imagination perhaps opens for them the gates of heaven, and sees them crowned in the long hereafter with a diadem of praise. But do you think that any divine soul was ever actuated by hope of such a heaven? What reward have they? An approving conscience? A doubtful good. An approving conscience implies a consciousness of virtue; but conscious virtue is tainted with something that is not virtue. To say that virtue is its own reward is false if it means that moral heroes find satisfaction in the contemplation of their worth. What reward have they? I know of but one, — they increase in themselves the amount of being; that is, of Godhead. The end of all right doing is to greaten the sum of being. To be heroic and strong and good is the true and only compensation for earthly loss and pain. This is eternal life, which is not a thing to come, but a thing that is. In fulness of being we have the unknown quantity in the dark equation of charac-

ter and fortune which has puzzled the wit and tried so sorely the faith of mankind.

Life has two prizes which it offers to man's choice,—having, and being; having part in the goods of life, and being part of the absolute Good. Both are desirable, but not always compatible the one with the other. Heroic souls, when driven into straits where both will not go, where one or the other must be sacrificed, give up having and the hope of having, and find their reward in new measures of being. Blame not those who believe greatly in having; it is impossible to deny the advantage of possession, the hold it gives on this mortal world. But “I have overcome the world” was the saying of one who had nothing, and yet had all. Possession is good, but, after all, the best thing is to possess one's self.

THE
THEISM OF REASON
AND THE
THEISM OF FAITH.

SIR HUMPHRY DAVY, the foremost genius among Englishmen of science in the early part of this century, declared toward the close of his life that he envied no man's talents, wit, or learning; but that if he were to choose what to him would be the most delightful, and he believed the most salutary, it would be a firm religious faith. Such a choice indicates a certain measure of faith already existing. It is the cry of the heart asserting itself against the doubts of the understanding: "I believe; Lord, help thou mine unbelief."

On the other hand, Michael Faraday, pupil and successor of Sir Humphry, and next to him on the honor-roll of science, seems to have experienced no such conflict between faith and understanding; was troubled apparently with no religious

doubts ; as much at home in the conventicle as in the laboratory ; never turning on the deeper questions of the soul — questions of spiritual import — the light which he shed so effectively on chlorine and carbon ; coolly ignoring his identity ; erecting a barrier of non-intercourse between Faraday professor of chemistry, and Faraday the Sandemanian devotee ; accepting in the one character the invitation of the Queen to dinner on a Sunday, and in the other submitting without a murmur to the rigid discipline of the most intolerant of sects for so doing.

There can hardly be a question as to which of the two positions is the nobler, the more worthy a rational soul, — that of the master, who hesitated before the mystery he could not fathom, or that of the pupil, who shut his eyes and swallowed the creed, ignoring any mystery involved in it ; that of Davy, in whom inquiry bred doubt, or that of Faraday, who obstinately refused to inquire. In all belief there is choice, either active election or passive consent. In the even balance of reasons for and against, if decision is taken it is an act of volition, conscious or unconscious, that turns the scale. But faith which is merely a creature of the will, repelling investigation or predetermining the result, has no enlightening influence and no value as a minister of truth ; it is not inspiration,

but arrest, — not a perception, but a grab in the dark.

A third position as to religion assumed by men of science is that of Mr. Tyndall and others, who, without affirmation or denial, simply wash their hands of all that, rule it out of the domain of philosophic inquiry, and complacently relegate spiritual truths to the region of the emotions.

From these examples, which are typical, and from other examples of scientific renown, it appears that science, which has so illumined the material world and conquered such vast tracts from the realms of space, which has changed the face of the earth, affords no aid to the soul in her deepest need, and sheds no gleam of light on those interests without which all that science can achieve is just to amuse and to ease this creature life. It is amusing to know that the sun is ninety odd millions of miles distant from our earth, and is made of sodium, calcium, iron, carbon, manganese, and other substances identical with earthly elements. It amuses us to know that four hundred and sixty millions of millions of light-waves hitting the eye in a second make red, and that there are stars so distant that if suddenly struck out of existence, dwellers on the earth would continue to see them for thousands of years by the light which they emitted thousands of years ago. Then again it is an easing

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of our creature life to be able to accomplish in a few hours a journey which formerly required as many days, to get messages in less than no time from the other side of the globe, and have one's leg cut off, when necessary, without a sensation of pain. But I cannot see that man's estate as a moral and immortal being is essentially benefited, or spiritual progress furthered, by these comforts and curiosities. Conquests of time and space have no-wise facilitated the conquest of self. It is nearer to Japan than it was seventy years ago, but as far as ever to the peace of God. The scientist himself, if not a mere fingering and ogling busy-body, must sometimes be visited by questionings to which laboratory and observatory furnish no answer. The world which Science occupies with her lenses and crucibles, is ringed and washed by a sea of wonder, navigable only to Faith. The former science is the sum of those views which are verifiable by sense; the latter is the sum of those views which are not verifiable by sense. Which of the two is the larger domain? Science has no knowledge of the future. If things remain as they are, then such and such things will happen. But will things remain as they are? Science is dumb. Yet how much of life depends on things remaining as they are! We betake ourselves to nightly rest, not doubting that a morrow will dawn and the old

world move in its accustomed grooves, as all our yesterdays have known it to do. For this assurance we are indebted, not to Science, but to Faith.

Astronomy predicts an eclipse of the sun which, some time hence, shall be visible in certain localities. We entertain no doubt of the accuracy of that prediction. Competent observers of such phenomena make their preparations accordingly. The prediction is based on the supposition that sun and earth will continue in being until the term assigned. That supposition rests wholly on Faith. Science furnishes no guarantee that sun and earth may not explode before that term arrives, or that some distant body, unknown to astronomy, some fiery traveller from the confines of being, may not invade our skies and dash our system into chaos.

Again, Science knows nothing of causes or causation. She knows only certain habits of matter which she dignifies with the name of laws. She can give no account of the origin of things. She finds the beginnings of the solar system in a cloud of fire-mist. Whence that fire-mist she does not say; for all she knows or cares, it may have existed from eternity. She derives the vegetable and animal world by progressive evolution from certain primordial cells,—what she calls protoplasm,—rejoicing in the thought of a genesis independent of

any creative fiat. To the question, how came protoplasm and the life proceeding thence, Science has no answer. She knows only things, and the evolutions of things from things.

Intelligent Will and a moral government of the universe, implied in our sense of moral obligation, are the only God that reason knows; they constitute the substance of philosophic theism. But the God of reason is not commensurate with the God of faith, and does not satisfy the demands of religion. Religion leans to anthropomorphism; it craves a personal God, a being not only ideally distinct, but essentially secerned from the world. God and the world,—religion demands the antithesis. Indeed, the world, until a comparatively recent period, was held by Christian theologians to be utterly godless. The author of the "*Theologia Germanica*" expressly declares that material Nature and the Devil are one. Christendom—thanks in part to Spinoza, whose fundamental thought has had its influence even with those who repudiate his pantheism; and thanks still more to natural science, which has taken the place of the old scholastic philosophy, Bacon, Newton, and Leibniz succeeding to Duns Scotus, Occam, and Saint Thomas—Christendom no longer entertains the notion of a God-forsaken world. But religion still craves the separate God,—a God who has his

dwelling outside the world; in popular phrase, above the skies.¹ Here reason is at fault, and wants to know where and how.

Swedenborg asserts that the human form is that in which God appears to spiritual vision. Who shall dispute his saying? Who can practically distinguish between spiritual vision and imagination? No doubt, if I am to conceive of God at all as taking a definite shape, it will be the human form, since that is the most perfect that I can conceive. But the mental concept does not necessarily imply a corresponding object. To suppose that God exists thus objectively concluded in a human form, is to suppose him spatially bounded,—an idea which reason refuses to entertain. Reason is satisfied with nothing less than the universe of being as embodied in the Infinite Presence.

Essential to religion is belief in prayer, in the hearing and granting of prayer by the Ruler of the universe. The belief is one of the dearest convictions of the human heart. If philosophy condemns it, better, one would say, to let go philosophy than be without it.

Here again reason is at fault. The notion of a sovereign who hears and considers the petition

¹ "Infinite lengths beyond the bounds
Where stars revolve their little rounds."

of a subject, and grants or denies as may be most expedient for him, is one whose leading reason cannot follow. It supposes the All-knowing, the Unerring, to act upon an impulse from without. The finite mind is liable to be so actuated. Moved from without, swayed by foreign impulse, it is forced back upon itself. It considers, questions, deliberates; in a word, reflects. If man were infallible, all-knowing, there would be no arrest in his mental activity, no reflection. Can we impute reflex action, the result of arrest, to Infinite Intelligence? Can there be in God any arrest of continuous action, any backing of the current, any deliberation, where the will itself is clairvoyant, and seeing and doing are one? To reason such reflex action in deity seems incongruous. In the view of reason, the divine mind acts without deliberation, without reflection,—not blindly, of course, but knowingly, infallibly, comprehending the consciousnesses of finite beings in its own super-conscious action.

Prayer, accordingly, in the view of reason, cannot be a suggestion to the Infinite Mind of something to be considered and granted if expedient. Rather, it is a part of the system of things, a power which takes effect when not overborne by contrary forces or frustrated by the necessities of Nature. No one claims that prayers, even of

devout souls, are always answered in the sense of the suppliant. The theological statement of the cause of the failure is that God, having heard, for wise though inscrutable reasons sees fit to deny. The philosophic statement, identical in substance, is that the force exerted in the prayer collides with contrary forces, or breaks against the necessities of the common weal. Where the prayer *is* answered in the sense of the suppliant, it is not necessary — as Science assumes, and therefore rejects the theory of prayer — to suppose a change in the order of Nature; rather, that the prayer itself is a part of the order of Nature, embraced in the great world-scheme of which all the parts and agencies work together as factors, latent or apparent, in every event that occurs. It will naturally be objected to this view that prayer is spontaneous in the consciousness of the suppliant, that the feeling which prompts it originates in the urgency of the moment, that it takes for granted a present hearing, and that no one would pray who supposed his prayer to be, as it were, a foregone determination. I might reply to this objection that the word “foregone” misstates the case by attributing to God, with whom there is no before or after, the limitations of human nature, which knows things only in the order of time. But I withhold the reply. I frankly admit the force of the objection,

and content myself with saying that this is a case where reason cannot follow, — where reason must yield to faith. Fortunately our ratiocinations do not of necessity influence our conduct. The intellectual and the emotional life may pursue their parallels in one and the same subject, never converging in one operation, and never conflicting in their separate courses. A man may theorize freely, and yet, when emotion prompts, pray fervently, although the implied expectation of the prayer can find no warrant in his theories.

So much as to prayers for external good. The question of prayer for internal aid and blessing, — prayer whose objects lie within the domain of the moral life, to which it is insisted by some that prayer should be confined, — the problem admits of an easier solution. We may suppose, beyond the limits of the fleshly life, an invisible community of finite, conscious intelligences, whose action is not determined by any world-scheme or natural necessity, but free to obey impulsions which come to them from kindred spirits, whether in the flesh or out of the flesh, and to club their forces for moral ends. Such a community, a society of spirits united by spiritual affinities, cognizant of human on-goings, and banded together under moral leadership for moral ends, may be conceived as one being, a divine man in Swedenborg's sense, the

Lord of the moral world. Upon such a being human prayers — so they be prayers of the inner man — would act with *compulsory* force, engaging all the powers of Heaven to combine in rendering the desired help. I say of the inner man. Prayer does not always represent the interior will. It may be sincere so far as the consciousness of the suppliant is concerned. The slave of lawless passion in a fit of remorse may pray with fervor to be delivered from the bondage he loathes. But underneath the superficial repentance the will may still be held captive and withhold its consent. It is only when the will prays that the prayer is effectual.

In this hypothesis of a spirit-world distinct from the material, having its own leader and head, I am confronted with a question which reaches to the very foundations of theism. Is the ruler of the moral or spirit world identical with the Power that reigns in the natural, with the Author and Governor of the material universe? If so, what proof have we of that identity? I have never been satisfied with the logic of Natural Theology, so called, when from the marks of almighty power and skill apparent in Nature it stretches its argument to prove from Nature the moral attributes of justice, love, and holiness. In the world of sense the clear adaptation of means to ends, the compensations of celestial mechanics, the miracles of vegetable and animal

life, declare a superhuman Intelligence; they reveal the divine artist, the geometrizing God. On the other hand, in the world of spirit, in the conscious human world, the moral sense and moral experience declare with equal distinctness a moral government, an authority independent of the human, a supreme order which man did not invent, of which he feels himself the subject, and whose jurisdiction he cannot escape. Here are two distinct powers: are they one and the same God? The old theology, as we saw, evaded the problem by consigning the material world to the Devil. The tendency of modern science is to resolve the moral world with its law and Lord into a process of nature. The theory of evolution pronounces what we call the moral law and receive as divine authority to be the result of the accumulated experience of the human race, demonstrating, and therefore commanding, what is most conducive to human well-being. The demonstration I grant, but not the command. Perception of expediency does not exhaust the idea of right, nor explain its origin. Cases are conceivable in which expediency, except in the reflex sense of satisfaction of conscience, shall conflict with the right. The very idea of right implies an aboriginal sense of moral obligation entirely independent of expediency, a moral law within, which prescribes in some cases

a course of conduct not at all, so far as human foresight can measure, conducive to our own or others' well-being. Nothing can account for this sense of right but the supposition of some authority prior to all experience and independent of the fleshly will. Have we any sufficient ground for identifying that authority with the author and governor of the material universe?

Kant, as we saw,¹ finds a bond of unity between the two; he reasons from the moral law to a God of nature. The existence of a God, he argues, is a postulate of practical reason, as being the only security for the realization of that good for which the moral law commands us to strive, the only ground of the supposed connection between goodness and blessedness. A postulate is not a demonstration. But what is the good for which the moral law commands us to strive? Only such as under known conditions we are conscious of a power to promote. And what is the supposed connection between goodness and blessedness? It is purely moral; a moral blessedness, goodness is supposed to insure, not a material good. No one claims that virtue is a negotiable draft on Nature for physical satisfactions. It is only, then, a God of the moral world, not a God in nature, identical with that moral ruler which Kant's argument goes to prove. It assumes

¹ See the previous Essay, page 15.

a connection between the natural and the moral, which is the very point in question. The question is still unsolved.

Is the ruler of the moral world identical with the author of the material? — identical with the Power that rounded the suns and flung them into place, that peopled the earth with her various kinds, that in one mood feathered the cockatoo and painted the butterfly's wing, and in another mood fashioned the milleped and the mud-turtle, and in still another the cobra and the scorpion? If so, should we not expect to find in the one the antitype of the other, or at least a marked consent between the two? But in vain do I seek in Nature for any confirmation of the moral law, in vain for any intimation, for any faintest recognition, of the sense of right. On the contrary, what most impresses me in Nature is the absence of moral bonds. I see violence, rapacity, cruelty, murderous cunning everywhere rampant, subject to no retribution, sure of equal satisfactions with meekness and innocence. The moral law forbids its subjects to harm one another, it bids them do unto others as they would be done by. But the tribes of earth are organized and intended to prey on each other. Universal internecine war is the order of Nature. It is nonsense to say that "all Nature's difference keeps all Nature's peace." What kind of peace is

that where one half of the brute creation are perpetually lying in wait for their prey, and the other half living in perpetual dread of their enemies? What the poet really meant was that all Nature's difference keeps all Nature's balance, prevents the excess of any one kind. But who will pretend that such excess might not have been prevented, had it pleased creative power, in other less murderous ways? I see in Nature the will to perpetuate her kinds, but not to secure their happiness, except so far as may be necessary for their preservation. I see what seems to be, from a human point of view, a malicious multiplication of noxious vermin, — Colorado-beetles, buffalo-moths, canker-worms, cimex lectularious, pulex irritans, phylloxera, aphides, and no end. I suppose these creatures have some satisfaction in being; some immunities they certainly enjoy, — absence of moral responsibility, exemption from the rancors of ambition and the stings of remorse. But I question if the satisfaction of life to them compensates the annoyance they cause to us. If dowered with reason, these creatures might complain of the existence of man, so detrimental to insect life. But the gift of reason would seem to confer on man a prior right to the ground; and, reasoning from a human point of view, I must think that the business of parasitic life is overdone.

Can we exonerate Nature from the charge of moral indifference by any evidence of moral qualities in the animal kingdom? Is there anything that can be strictly termed *moral* in brute Nature? The love of the brute mother for her offspring, which might seem to partake of this character, admits of another interpretation. These instinctive affections of bird and beast may be viewed as simply the cheapest expedient by which Nature could secure the protection of her several kinds in the dangerous period of their infancy. They accordingly cease when the creature arrives at maturity. They are beautiful to witness, but not distinctively moral. The fidelity of the dog to his master is a better instance; but in the case of animals tamed and domesticated by man, the question is transferred from original nature to another sphere, where human influence has grafted new qualities on the primitive stock. In the realm of Nature proper, of wild Nature, I find no proofs of moral life, no conscience, no sense of wrong distinct from fear, no just retribution, nor any pity for human woe. On the contrary, I am affronted with the injustices, the cruelties which everywhere prevail,—the animosities, the conflicts, the struggle for existence, the parasitic invasions, the inhospitalities, the rigors of climate, the ferocity of tempests, the unsparing devastations, the rages and

the ruin. Unfeeling is Nature ; mortal agony calls upon her in vain in its supreme hour for sympathy or aid. Nations perishing with famine can extort with all their prayers no rain from her skies, and no food from her clods.

Theologians, seeking in creation the reflection of their own idea, find marks of divine benevolence in the animal kingdom. They point to the large provision made for the satisfaction of animal wants, they praise the manifest joy of living things, the sports of young creatures, the merry gambols, the song of birds, the aimless ecstasy of insects waltzing in the sun. I am not insensible to these felicities ; but here again I discern the same policy of self-preservation which Nature exhibits in all her works. The brute creation could not be denied some modicum of satisfaction if the brute creation is to hold its place in the scheme of things. Some joy of being, some tracts of contentment there must be in order that animal life may endure. If the life were all, and only pain, it would long since have failed from the earth. The question is not whether brutes have pleasure, but whether their pleasures exceed, or even equal, their devastations and their pains. Who knows ? What we *do* know is that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

Unfeeling is Nature, and yet how fair ! With

how bland a smile the enchantress conceals her atrocities! She lures with the ravishing blue of summer seas, and hides the devil-fish and the shark that lurk in their depths. She charms us with "meadow, grove, and stream," and seems unconscious of the pests and the poisons which she harbors in her bosom,—the nightshade in the glen, the rattlesnake beneath the rock. Pregnant with mischief, yet serenely fair. That surface-beauty who will deny? Whom has it not beguiled? I know it well,—the peace which steals into the soul with the contemplation of the outspread landscape, the pensiveness, the mysterious witchery, the sense of a near and loving presence which takes us captive when the great Mother spreads her lure in sun and shade and invites us to her breast. I feel the fascination; it has constituted a large part of my enjoyment of life. But it is not there that I find any logical proof of the God of my faith. That sense of a comforting presence which we feel in our commerce with Nature, is it anything more than the soothing influence which contemplation of natural beauty exercises by drawing away the soul from itself, by hushing for a little the mordant cares, the vain desires and vain regrets, by checking the importunity of the will, and putting self-consciousness to sleep? Perhaps that enjoyment of Nature so character-

istic of the modern as contrasted with the ancient world, is due to the fact that modern life is more subjective than the ancient, and finds in objective contemplation its needful complement.

Many attempts have been made to reconcile the evils of life with the belief in an omnipotent, all-wise, and beneficent God. I find no difficulty in such adjustment so far as the evils arising from the operation of natural and moral laws are concerned. Sickness, pestilence, famine, disasters by sea and land, even sin and its consequences, — social disorders, hereditary taint, — all these I see to be liabilities inherent in such a constitution of things as on the whole shall make for good and not for evil. The difficulty arrives when I detect in Nature what seems to be a malicious intent, — a quality in things animate or inanimate which must of necessity cause more pain than pleasure, and the possible good accruing from which, I must believe, could have been secured by other, safer means. It is there that my theism wavers, and I see very clearly why Christian theologians have assigned the dominion of nature to the Devil, and why all the ante-Christian religions have assumed along with their good deities an opposition dynasty of evil ones, — it was so natural to believe in an aboriginal Evil from which somehow all subsequent evil has sprung.

Must I then renounce the view without which Nature would cease to charm? Shall I refuse to see God where Spinoza saw nothing else? Something in me more persuasive than logic, in spite of the moral blank and in spite of the malignities which affront me in Nature, forces me to believe that one Power reigns in Nature and the soul! There must be some atoning word which reconciles the holy and the hateful, the known divine and the seeming undivine, which resolves this dualism of nature and spirit in that deeper unity which piety craves.

That word is *man*. The microcosm of the human world comprehends the moral and immoral, the divine and the undivine, the holy and the hateful, in one. In man are the heights and the depths, the horrors and the graces; the cobra and the scorpion are in him along with the lover and the saint. The blessedest and the damnedest, Satan and Christ, heaven and hell, define the scope and measure, the compass of his being. But a true philosophy teaches that pure, unqualified malignity is not found in him; that in man, at the vilest, the seed of God is not wholly extinct; that, as Emerson says, "Love never relaxes its effort;" that the Spirit will finally prevail. And so we may believe with Paul that the creation itself will yet be "delivered from

the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." And so we may see reflected in that wondrous synthesis, man, the unity of God and Nature pervading the macrocosm of the universe, the identity of the Holy that inhabits eternity with the Power that works in earth and time. But reason alone does not suffice to establish that identity, does not suffice to prove the God whom religion craves.

From the nature of the case the existence of such a God must be undemonstrable; for only that can be demonstrated which can be succinctly defined, and only that can be defined which is finite. Transcending the reach of the understanding, eluding the grasp of Science, this supreme truth will be likely, in an age in which Science is more active than Faith, to encounter opposition of the understanding, which distastes what it cannot comprehend. The atheism of Science belongs to the method of Science, and should not discredit the idea of God, which, if held at all, must be held by Faith. And let it be understood that Faith is not the resort of weakness, but a master faculty which has its rights in philosophy as well as religion; not the vassal of Tradition, but a peer of the intellectual realm, co-ordinate with Reason, and equally essential to the health and growth of the human mind.

Faith, it is true, requires the qualifying check of Science, without which she would lapse into monstrous superstition. But Science requires no less the counterpoise of Faith, without which she would soon deplete the mind of all those aspirations and hopes which sweeten and ennoble the gift of life.

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